

I claim:

1. An interface between a site and an external network for screening packets on the external network, each packet having an associated source address, the interface comprising:
 - 5 a. an heuristic profiler for ascribing a characteristic value to each address on the external network based at least on prior activity associated with the address; and
 - b. a filter for selectively passing a particular packet from the external network to the site based at least on the characterizing
10 value ascribed by the heuristic profiler to the source address associated with the particular packet.
2. An interface in accordance with claim 1, wherein the heuristic profiler ascribes a characteristic value to each known address on the external
15 network based at least on characteristics of prior packets received by the site bearing the source address associated with the particular packet.
3. An interface in accordance with claim 1, wherein the site is a computer.
4. An interface in accordance with claim 1, wherein the site is a local
20 network of computers.
5. An interface in accordance with claim 1, wherein the site is a web server.
6. The interface of claim 1, further comprising a firewall in communication with the site, the firewall interposed between the site
25 and the network.
7. The interface of claim 1, further comprising a load monitor for monitoring the traffic of packets between the network and the site relative to a specified nominal load.
8. The interface of claim 7, wherein the filter selectively passes a
30 particular packet based at least on the monitored traffic of packets.
9. The interface of claim 1, further comprising a history module for developing a time profile of observations of packets received from

associated source addresses.

10. A method for screening a flow of packets between a site and an external network, each packet having an associated source address, the interface comprising:
 - 5 a. ascribing a hierarchical value to a subset of addresses on the external network based at least on prior activity associated with each address of the subset; and
 - b. selectively passing packets from the external network to the site based at least on the hierarchical value ascribed to the source
10 address associated with each packet.
11. A method according to claim 10, further comprising checking each packet for compliance with specified protocol standards.
12. A method according to claim 10, further comprising developing a time
15 profile of observations of packets received from associated source addresses.
13. A method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of monitoring the traffic of packets between the network and the site relative to a specified nominal load.
14. A method according to claim 13, further including the step of setting a
20 threshold standard based on the monitored traffic of packets between the network and the site.
15. A method according to claim 14, wherein the step of selectively passing packets from the external network to the site is based, at least in part, on the hierarchical value ascribed to the source address
25 associated with each packet relative to the threshold standard.
16. A method for characterizing a subset of a universe of network addresses, each address corresponding to an associated device, the method based at least on observation of a transmission from each associated device, the method comprising:
 - 30 a. recording occurrence of an observation;
 - b. recording a time associated with the observation;
 - c. retaining a timed profile of observations of transmissions from

each associated device; and

- d. using the timed profile to assign a hierarchical value to each network address of the subset.

17. A computer program product for use on a computer system for screening data flow between an external network device and a local site, the computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code thereon, the computer readable program code comprising:

- a. program code for ascribing a hierarchical value to a subset of addresses on the external network based at least on prior activity associated with each address of the subset; and
- b. program code for selectively passing packets from the external network to the local site based at least on the hierarchical value ascribed to the source address associated with each packet.

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